

Devilish Teachings

SPREADING DEVILISH FAITH AT A LOTUS HALL⁸¹

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This piece deals with one of the least well-known and yet most important characteristics of Sung local society, the pervasive existence of forbidden religious sects. Members of the elite were both horrified and frightened by these apparently spontaneous expressions of popular religious fervor. The sectaries are stereotyped as people who violate the fundamental tenets of being Chinese. They mixed men and women without proper discrimination; they gathered at night in mixed groups; they did not abide by the practices of filial piety; they spread barbarian behaviors; and perhaps most frightening of all, they gathered together large numbers of people at places not under the control of the state. The Chinese traditional bureaucratic elite was terrified of any organized group not under their close supervision. A *modus vivendi* had been worked out with the Buddhists and Taoists. Not so with other groups. In the area from which this report probably came, these sectaries might well have been Manichaeans, originally Persian refugees from the onslaught of the Islamic Arabs and then a growing body of Chinese converts. Manichaeans seem to have been concentrated in rural areas. They were involved in a number of uprisings against the government, possibly pushed into resistance by government pressure. In this particular instance Ts'ai Chiu-hsüan follows an age-old Chinese governmental policy, separate leaders from followers, destroy the leadership and pardon the followers.

According to the edict: "Those who practice vegetarianism, worship demons, gather at night and disperse at dawn, in order to transmit and practice some kind of devilish faith shall be sentenced to strangulation.⁸² Their followers, liable for penal registration at three thousand *li*, are not to have their sentences reduced by two degrees through amnesty."⁸³ Another edict says: "Those who gather at night and disperse at dawn under the pretext of chanting scriptures as a form of religious practice but who congregate in mixed company shall be

sentenced to three years of penal servitude. Those who have been seduced are each to be beaten one hundred strokes." Another edict says, "Those who are neither Buddhists nor Taoists but who gather as a scripture group, congregate in large numbers, and practice religious ways shall each be beaten one hundred strokes." What is stated in the laws and ordinances is as clear as the sun and stars.

Now someone, for example Chang Ta-yung 張大用, who has violated the above-cited edicts and ordinances, has arbitrarily collected money from numerous people, usurped official manners, and falsely established a bogus official hierarchy with lofty titles for himself, how can he be pardoned?

While I was observing local customs and about to impose strict restraints, Chang Ta-yung was brought to the court for having bound and beaten Buddhist monks at the Lo Lake Temple. Thus Heaven, abhorring his evil, caused him to defeat himself.

We find that upon examination the various crimes involved in his case total seven. First, he transmitted and practiced a devilish faith and falsely chanted scriptures in mixed company. Second he invented various pretexts to get money and rice, pressuring people to purchase and donate incense. Third, he personally styled himself the august chief, with the title of grand duke, enthroned majestically so that the crowd could gather around him to pay its respects. Fourth, he established a [bogus] official hierarchy in charge of records and seals and issued directives through this hierarchy as if it were a government office. Fifth, in order to get more money from the people he fabricated an imperial document to delude those who saw him or heard him. Sixth, and even more dangerously, he claimed to have magical powers as a cover for his wicked conspiracy. His followers were not permitted to take medicine for illness, nor to offer sacrifices to their ancestors, thus making them violate filial piety and plunging them into grievous offenses. Seventh, after seizing and beating Buddhist monks, he had them bound and fettered and thrown into a hidden pit. Creating an uproar, with his cohorts dressed in bogus military uniforms, he traveled around to other places. As if this were not alarming enough, he had his cohorts under his orders accompany him to the capital, going in and out.

He spread mats without there being a brick floor underneath and had his followers kneeling in a barbarian fashion for worship. This was called "looking upward to the golden cock."⁸⁴ He set up beds without brick supports underneath on which mixed company sat. This was called "tilling land with an iron ox."⁸⁵ His meetings were illegal

and improper. His followers were so numerous that when they gathered they were like a village. If we examine his intentions, it is clear that he is concealing something. If such evil roots are not eliminated, they may cause great harm.

Chang Ta-yung, the leader, is to be beaten fifty strokes of the heavy rod on the back, tattooed on the face, and sent for penal registration in a prison citadel command at a distance of two thousand *li*. He is not to be pardoned by amnesty. Liu Wan-liu 劉萬六 ["Ten Thousand Six"], second in the hierarchy, is to be beaten thirty strokes, spared the tattoo, and sent for penal registration in a prison citadel command at one thousand *li*. Li Liu-erh 李六二 ["Six-two"], the self-styled grand duke, and Ting Ch'ing-erh 丁慶二, who took the title of recorder, are each to be beaten one hundred strokes and sent to a neighboring prefecture for registered control. An official shall be assigned to record their interrogations. They are then to be sent under escort to this judicial office for formal sentencing.

Hsia Tao-chu 夏道主 dared to gather a crowd outside the Ling-chih gate. He shall be spared a complete investigation. The district is directed to carry out the order that he be expelled from the prefectural border. Chang Wu-shih 張五十 ["Fifty"] and Li Tao 李道 are also exempted from complete investigations. They are ordered to find new vocations promptly.

The district is directed to change the three confession halls connected with this case into places where the people can pray for rain and good weather. The district shall also transfer some Buddhist priests from nearby temples to serve there as watchmen.

Those who took part in this congregation either because of seduction or pressure did not do so through their own volition, nor were they accustomed to it. Regardless of whether they have been detained for questioning or not, regardless of whether they have confessed to their participation or not, all of them are to be exempted from guilt by association. Nor are they to be summoned again. It is hoped that they will immediately abandon these evil beliefs and again become good people, attending to their parents, worshipping their ancestors, taking care of their own health, protecting their wives and children, and looking after their means of livelihood. If they should dare to gather again, they are definitely to be punished.

Directives are to be given to the patrolling inspectors, sheriffs, precincts, and neighborhood security groups to remain constantly on the alert. Placards are to be posted at all the prefectures and districts.